GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2682
ANSWERED ON:16.12.2008
WHITE PAPER ON WTO TALKS
Adhalrao Patil Shri Shivaji

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to issue a white paper on World Trade Organisation (WTO) talks;

(b) if so, the details and the facts in this regard and if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether out of about 20 issues on the agenda, 17 items were successfully dealt with; and

(d) is so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY(SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

(a) and (b) The Doha round of global trade talks at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), begun in 2001, are still continuing. These negotiations cover Agriculture, Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA), Services and several other areas as part of a 'single undertaking'. A mini-Ministerial meeting of the WTO was held in July 2008 with the objective of finalizing Agriculture and NAMA modalities. The meeting, however, ended without reaching an agreement on any issue. Multilateral discussions at the WTO resumed in October 2008. Since the negotiating process is an ongoing one and is presently focused only on Agriculture and NAMA, a white paper is not proposed by Government at this juncture.

(c) and (d) After the July 2008 mini-Ministerial meeting of the WTO, the impression sought to be conveyed by some of the developed countries and certain sections of the international media was that almost all issues were successfully dealt with and that the talks broke down on only one or two issues. However, at the WTO, the general principle is that "nothing is agreed to until everything is agreed to". In July 2008, while Ministers were amenable to moving towards an agreement on several complex issues in both Agriculture and NAMA, there were many others which either could not be discussed at all or on which agreement could not be reached on account of persisting differences.